

In the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) ~~In aA~~ method for converting a crude starting material comprising 5 to 80% by weight of benzene, and other aromatic hydrocarbons and non-aromatic compounds in an amount of at least 1% by weight to useful C7 and C8 aromatic hydrocarbons, ~~the method which comprises contacting a crude starting material comprising aromatic hydrocarbons, wherein said aromatic hydrocarbons comprise from 5 to 80% by weight of benzene and other aromatic hydrocarbons, and a non aromatic compound content of at least 1% by weight, the steps which comprise comprising:~~
 - (A) lowering the content of said non-aromatic compounds by distillation to produce a refined starting material having a non-aromatic compound content having a value of 1% by weight or less by distillation, and
 - (B) reacting said refined starting material having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less in the presence of hydrogen and a catalyst containing mordenite and between about 0.02 to 2% by weight rhenium to diminish the benzene content of said refined starting material having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less and to convert at least a portion of said refined starting material having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less into C7 or C8 aromatic hydrocarbons.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Previously Presented) The method for converting aromatic hydrocarbons as claimed in claim 1, wherein said aromatic hydrocarbon conversion reaction is transalkylation reducing benzene content and C9 content to increase the contents of xylene and toluene in the product.
4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently amended) The method for converting aromatic hydrocarbons as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ~~refined starting material~~ having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less contains C9+ alkyl-aromatic hydrocarbons.

6. (Currently amended) The method for converting aromatic hydrocarbons as claimed in claim 5, wherein said benzene and said C9+ aromatic hydrocarbons in the ~~refined starting material~~ having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less are reduced and C7 and C8 aromatic hydrocarbons in the product are produced.

Claims 7 - 10 (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) The method defined in claim 1, wherein the ~~refined starting material~~ having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less has a toluene or xylene content that is lower than the equilibrium composition of toluene and/or xylene in said ~~refined starting material~~ having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less.

12. (Previously presented) The method defined in claim 1, wherein said benzene-containing hydrocarbon material and said catalyst in the presence of which said contact takes place has a reaction pressure of 0.1 - 100 MPa and is at a temperature of 200 - 650°C.

13. (Currently amended) The method defined in claim 1, wherein hydrogen is present in contact with said ~~refined starting material~~ having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less and said catalyst, and wherein said hydrogen has a flow rate of 0.1 and 20 mol/mol in terms of hydrogen/~~refined starting material~~ having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less.

14. (Currently amended) The method defined in claim 1, wherein the content of said non-aromatic compound in said ~~refined starting material~~ having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less is 0.5% by weight or less.

15. (Currently amended) The method defined in claim 1, wherein the content of said non-aromatic compound in said ~~refined starting material~~ having a non-aromatic compound content of 1% by weight or less is 0.1% by weight or less.

16. (Cancelled)